

Fenstanton Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies
reported in Cambridge Newspapers
summarised by

Mike Petty



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Most of these stories originally appeared in the Cambridge Daily/Evening/News or the Cambridgeshire Weekly News. They are supplemented by some articles published in the Cambridge Independent Press or Cambridge Chronicle

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library together with have detailed cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the 1960s.

The complete 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbook' of which this is a small section is published online at bit.ly/CambsCollection.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check. There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – www.mikepetty.org.uk for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2017

1789

Fenstanton riot 1789 – 85 11 08

1897 11 05

At St Ives rural district council meeting Mr Barlow said that the Fenstanton pump was only about eight feet from the pond and every time cattle or horses went to the pond the water was stirred up and became black, and this water found its way into the well. If they cleaned out the well a dozen times they would never made him believe the water in that well would be good because the water would percolate through to the well

1898 01 05 c

At St Ives Rural District Council meeting the clerk reported what had been done in respect of the pump at Fenstanton. Mr Odams said a capital job had been made of it and the water was now excellent. He knew the water would come right if properly seen to. That pump had supplied water for the village of 100 years, notwithstanding its proximity to the pond. It had always been pure water until a post was placed into the wall of the well. The water was now perfectly pure

1898 01 21

The first annual meeting of the St Ives and District Nursing Association was held in the Corn Exchange, St Ives. The number of cases attended have been 117 of which 71 were in St Ives, 19 in Fenstanton and 27 in Hemingford. Of these eight have died, five have been removed to hospital and 90 have recovered. Twenty of the cases were accidents, several of them serious, and of such a nature as to make removal to the hospital difficult, so that the patients derived much benefit from skilled nursing in their own homes.

1898 01 25

A very large company assembled at the Golden Lion Hotel, St Ives, when three licenced houses were put up for sale by auction. The first house offered was the Pelican Inn, Warboys. It was fully licenced and well fitted up with a frontage to the High Street. It was sold for £1,000, it being fully expected to realize at least £1,500. Next was the Three Horseshoes in Woodhurst, brought for £500. The freehold beerhouse in Fenstanton known as the Prince's Feathers with the cottage adjoining was sold for £500 to Mr G.G. Wheeler as agent for Mr Burt, the well-known Fenstanton brewer

1898 05 12 c

A tramp was charged with sleeping in an outhouse without visible means of subsistence in Bridge Terrace, Fenstanton. He had sold his boots for fourpence at the Dolphin, and bought beer and bread and cheese with the money. The bench sentenced him to seven days hard labour. The prisoner thanked the magistrates and said when he came out he hoped they would give him a new suit of clothes, and then he would go to Liverpool

1900 08 24

At a meeting of Fenstanton parish council a circular was received with regard to overcrowding. There were cases of eight people with only two bedrooms. The law was perfectly clear; it was for the sanitary authorities to get the matter right. Mr Burt spoke very highly of the work done by the district nurse. She not only showed the people how to do things in a proper manner, but saw they were done, and sometimes did them herself. There would be no difficulty with regard to water supply in the future as in about two months the East Hunts Water Company could supply any amount.

1900 10 22

Properties at Dry Drayton and Comberton were submitted to public auction. The first lot consisted of the freehold licensed premises at Drayton known by the sign of the Queen's Head and three cottages in the rear. It was knocked down to Fenstanton brewery for £320. They also became the purchasers of an acre of land at Comberton at a price of £52 10s.

1902 01 20

Cambridge Star Brewery shareholders were told that the Directors had purchased the Fenstanton Brewery together with licensed premises and sundry private houses & cottages. That brewery has now been closed. On the whole the accounts were extremely satisfactory. Going back to the first report of the company in 1892 the assets had been increased by nearly £18,000

1903 05 23

Typhoid fever was present in Cambridge during the year, 17 cases in 14 households having been notified. Four were county cases admitted into Addenbrooke's Hospital for treatment; five were imported from Fenstanton, Swaffham, Norfolk, Littleport and London. Two cases were probably due to eating shellfish. Two were nurses who had charge of typhoid patients and others could not be accounted for. Three of the cases proved fatal

1907 01 16

A Fenstanton woman said an Over farmer had gone into the Dolphin, St Ives and alleged an improper connection between herself and a man who was a friend of the family who been in the habit of visiting her home. What made it worse was that she was within a week of her confinement and had not previously had a child for ten years. Now people she met in the street would not look at her. Defendant claimed it was a joke but the words had been uttered angrily with his face thrust into the face of her husband. Five of the jury were in favour of £6 damages and five in favour of one farthing. 07 01 16 a & b

1908 03 27

Ouse in flood, sheep drowned Fenstanton – 08 03 27

1910 06 17

A serious accident happened to John Holley, farmer of Fenstanton who was driving from his home when the axle of his trap broke. The wheel came off and frightened the horse, causing it to bolt. Mr Holley was thrown to the ground though his fall was somewhat broken by his coming down on the cushion of the trap which was cut into two parts. The gig was practically demolished. The horse continued its wild course along the road until stopped by Mr Burgess's yardman, a man named Jefferies, at considerable risk to his own life 10 06 17h

1910 12 09

All the low-lying land around Swavesey is under water. The roadway is completely submerged at the Swan Pond and foot passengers have to use the raised causeway, the gate openings in which are spanned by temporary bridges. Mr. J. Barnett, dealer of Fenstanton, came to grief when crossing with a horse and cart. One wheel sunk into the recently filled-in trench and became embedded for some time. Previously a cow had sunk in the soft soil near the same place and was with great difficulty dragged out. The railway line to St Ives has been carefully watched by gangs of men armed with flag. 10 12 09d

1912 02 09

Fire destroyed a large part of the first chicory factory in England, that of J.A. Wootten of Cambridge, at Fenstanton. The caretaker had been using an American oil stove in which he burnt paraffin oil and found the room was on fire. Thinking to extinguish the flames, he threw water on the stove, which caused the oil to run all over the room and enabled the flames to spread rapidly. The brigade tried to pump water from a pond but found the pipes were frozen

and the work of saving the factory had to be delayed while they were thawed with boiling water obtained in saucepans from neighbouring cottages. Fortunately the machinery was saved together with the bond room containing two tons of manufactured chicory. 12 02 09g

1912 06 07

Our little motor took us over a nice piece of tarred road towards Girton College but all too soon it ended and we were wending our way over some choice examples of the celebrated Cambridgeshire patches. Just outside Fenstanton a sudden improvement in the road surface was so marked that I looked round to see the reason, and espied the post marking the county boundary. The reason was at once apparent – I had left Cambs and was now in Hunts. But an abrupt turn to the right took us on the road to St Ives, and I began to wonder if I was back in Cambridgeshire. 12 06 07a & b

1913 02 07

A shocking double tragedy occurred at St Ives when the landlady of the Temperance Hotel, Market Hill and a German lodger were found in a room of the hotel, both stabbed through the heart. It seems she had been murdered and the man had committed suicide. They were discovered by the maid who returned from a cinema show to find the hotel in darkness. The landlady had separated from her husband and the German worked at the chicory factory at Fenstanton. They had been seen at a theatrical performance in the Corn Exchange and seemed on the best of terms 13 02 07 p8 CIP.

1914 06 26

A wife said her husband had been an engine driver and in 1904 went to Canada. He returned in 1913 and settled at Fenstanton on an income of 500 dollars from a farm in Manitoba. He accused her of spying on him and gave her a box on the ears. Then he got a stick and gave her a good thrashing. He was usually kind but when in drink used to threaten her. He said he had to be master in his own house.

1914 06 26 p8

1921 03 16

Fenstanton church fire in roof – 21 03 16j

1924 06 30c

As one of Thurston's traction engines was nearing Fenstanton the middle of the three trolleys it was drawing was noticed to be on fire. The flames quickly spread and the organ of the motor scenic railway, was soon well alight. As no water could be procured sand from the gravel pits was thrown over the fire but the flames proved too strong and the whole organ and the trolley upon which it was mounted completely collapsed. It is suggested the outbreak was due to a spark from the engine which found its way through the protecting wire gauze on top of the chimney.

1924 07 01 c

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1931 12 18

The Ouse and Cam Fishery Board had failed to net the carp in ponds at Hauxton and Fenstanton as they had 'mudded' for the winter, but the drawing of lakes at Madingley and

Longstowe Hall had yielded 15,000 fish, mostly roach and rudd. Several thousand gudgeon were also taken from Hinxtan Mill and placed in the Granta at Cambridge.31 12 18b

1932 04 12

Fenstanton cricket pavilion was totally destroyed by fire; within an hour there was nothing left but the charred remains of the wooden fence that surrounded it. All the cricket gear was saved. The pavilion was a 30-year-old wooden structure regarded as the best in Huntingdonshire. It was erected by voluntary subscriptions and insured for £200. The origin of the fire is a mystery. 32 04 12a

1932 07 22

Fenstanton's new village hall was opened by the Bishop of Ely. The idea was mooted 17 years ago and the work had gone on under three vicars. The hall had been converted out of some stables at the back of the vicarage at a cost of £500 and a piece of land added in the event of a further extensions being required. It gave parishioners the opportunity to develop fellowship, unity and enjoyment between one another. 32 07 22a

1934 03 21

A nurse travelling in an ambulance was killed and four men badly injured in a violent collision between a London ambulance and a Newmarket horse box at the Woolpack crossroads near Fenstanton. The Red Cross and St John ambulance was proceeding to Leeds to pick up a patient while the horsebox containing three horses from the Hon George Lambton's stables was heading to Lincoln races. One of the horses, Versicle, was favourite for the Lincolnshire handicap but had to be withdrawn, causing a revolution when the betting opened at Tattersall's 34 03 21

1940 05 22

Fenstanton share-out club charges – 40 05 22b

It is an "unmitigated tragedy" that Trinity Church, Huntingdon, a landmark for nearly 100 years, is to disappear, Paul Petty told Rotarians. It has been announced that because of its condition it will have to be demolished. At present Sunday services are held in the schoolroom. The foundation stone was laid on May 22 1867 by Thomas Coote of Fenstanton and it opened for worship on 16th September 1868. The total cost of providing the church was £10,600.

1950 12 18

"I think every road leading on to Huntingdon Road should have a 'Halt' sign", Coun A.T. Shelley told the Road Safety Committee. "I don't think there is one corner on Huntingdon Road between Fenstanton and Girton where there has not been an accident. It is the fastest road in the whole of East Anglia", he declared.

1959 04 01

The Oaklands Café at Fenstanton is well-run in every way but the owners have installed a gambling machine. One has to put in sixpenny pieces and pull down a handle which sets numbers revolving. If certain numbers come up you win various amounts of money. Police carried out a test: they put in 300 coins and 231 were returned. There was little skill attached and it was a game of chance. There were three buttons on the front of the machine which acted as a brake but the officer was not able to manipulate them. The machine was destroyed. 59 04 01 & 01a

The Cambridgeshire Collection has newspaper cuttings from this date

1962 11 01

The firm of Tom M. Scotney of St Ives, which employs 210 people on important defence and export contracts from some of the leading aircraft companies, will have to turn orders away,

an Inquiry was told. The lack of affordable housing means that they cannot attract skilled craftsmen. But proposals to erect staff dwellings on land at London Road, Fenstanton were opposed by planners who say the only access to the town was by the river bridge and it would add to traffic at peak hours. Residential development should be to the north of the town so retaining the identity of the Hemingfords and keeping away from potential flooded area. 62 11 01

1964 02 14

Fenstanton lock-up dates back to 1780 and is now a listed building. Lockups were usually inconspicuous, distinguished only by iron studded doors with small gratings. In the 17th century they were under the control of the parish constable. Prisoners were kept in them pending their transfer to the county gaol or an appearance before the magistrate. The constable was an officer of the manor and usually chief executive officer of the parish. In 1842 the appointment transferred to the parish vestry until the Police Act introduced police districts and the lock-up fell into disuse. 64 03 21

1965 01 29

Fenstanton bypass open for first time – photos – 65 01 29

1965 09 18

Fenstanton fire destroys three shops & cottage – 65 09 18a

1965 11 12

Fenstanton photo feature – 65 11 12b

1972 12 12

The death of 12 people on the three-lane A604 between Fenstanton and Cambridge brought protests from members of Mid-Anglia police authority. The chief constable, Mr F. Drayton Porter said "The sooner that road is made a dual carriageway the better. The police strongly object to three-lane roads. The A604 quite frankly has reached saturation point". The Department of the Environment had already been pressed to make the road into a dual carriageway but they wouldn't hear of it

1973 09 18

The environmental effects on the Cambridgeshire countryside and a number of villages in the building of the Cambridge bypasses are given in the Government's go-ahead to the projects. The inspector concludes that at Grantchester environmental intrusion would be mitigated by a properly conceived planting scheme & the effects on the village would not be serious. At Hauxton and Lt Shelford the environmental effects, though great, would not be intolerable. The Inspector does not support Girton's claims that the area will be severed in any practical sense by the Cambridge Northern Bypass. The new road would pass in a cutting and noise screening is recommended. At Fenstanton the Inspector thinks that the noise problem is more important than any partial severance of the village by the A604. He recommends noise screening,

1975 02 20

Four men ran a pirate commercial radio station from remote spots in the Cambridgeshire countryside, magistrates were told. They were caught in a field near Histon as they had just closed down a two-hour broadcasting session of Anglia Free Commercial Radio. They had previously put out two-hour broadcasts on Sundays from various spots in Cambridgeshire, and the programmes were heard in places as widespread as Exning, Waterbeach and Fenstanton. The magistrates ordered the transmitter to be forfeited. The men were fined between £50 and £70 each

1976 08 12

Cambridge Water Company has tentatively agreed to supply water in bulk to Anglian Water Authority areas north of St Ives. The operation would centre on a borderline area with Ramsey and Fenstanton on one side and Upwood and Hemingford Grey on the other. At a drought emergency conference it was announced that rationing would start in the Huntingdon and St Neots areas on October 11th, unless drastic action is taken by the public to conserve supplies.

1977 06 24c

Plans to make the A604 a dual carriageway between Bar Hill and Godmanchester have provoked a far greater public outcry than at first expected. The Department of Transport revealed it has received 91 protest letters, 24 of which were concerned with the effects on Fenstanton. They want to improve the road to link with the Huntingdon bypass so establishing a fast route between the East Coast ports and the Midlands. This was necessary to cope with the future volume of traffic, expected to reach 36,500 vehicles a day by 1995

1978 07 11

Service came out of the blue for a Cambridgeshire farmer with combine harvester trouble. It dropped out of the sky in what is claimed to be the first regular air service for farm machinery in distress. A Fenstanton farmer, Mr A. Behagg, uses Ursus-Bizon machines, produced in Poland, and their East Anglian distributors have introduced the 'servicing by helicopter' scheme in a bid to consolidate their foothold in the valuable English market

1981 01 03

The landlord of the Crown and Pipes pub in Fenstanton is to ask Lester Piggott to donate 'something suitable' to turn his bar into a 'shrine to racing'. He has bought a print of Piggott's eight Derby winners together with others of Arkle, Brigadier Gerard and Mill Reef and hopes to acquire jockeys' silks. It has always been a racing-oriented pub since Joe and Manny Mercer used to pop in on their way to northern tracks in the 1950s. 81 01 03

1981 01 06

Primary schools at Pymoor and Witcham may close next July; the Pymoor children will go to Lt Downham and the 35 pupils from Witcham will attend Mepal school. But Fen Drayton school may be given a temporary reprieve while councillors consider educational provision in the Fenstanton and Hilton area. 81 01 06a

1981 07 22

The first new bell for 210 years was hung alongside the five others in Fenstanton church. It was paid for by a group of American descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers whose patriarch, John Howland was born in the village in the 16th century and members of the society will be invited from the United States to the dedication service. 81 07 22a

1983 08 03

The Fenstanton postmaster, Anthony Hobbs, has suddenly found himself at the centre of a world spotlight. The Post Office is bringing out a series of stamps commemorating the village's most famous resident, the 18th-century gardener, Capability Brown. Now stamp collectors from all over the globe have been contacting him for first-day covers franked with a special mark designed by Jack Dady and a group of villagers 83 08 03 p10

1984 01 10

To the sound of bells, drums, accordion and the heavy clump of clogs more than 40 musicians from St Neots, Whittlesey, Downham Market and Stevenage brought Plough Monday to life in Fenstanton. Dances featured milk maids and ploughboys and songs were about good old ale and hearty dishes of parsnips. And if anybody noticed the modern paraphernalia of cars, flash guns and the searchlights of a television camera crew they were too polite to mention it.

Dancing also took place at Balsham where they took a plough into each of the village's three inns 84 01 10 p11

1984 04 02

A family bakers which has been in Fenstanton since 1860 closes its doors with the retirement of Charles and Vera Hunt. They have been at the bakery since 1954 when they moved from St Albans but it has been in Charles' family for four generations. Since it moved to the High Street in 1907 they have been using the same oil-burning brick oven. Their distinctive bread has been mentioned in guides to good food shops and customers are broken-hearted they are closing 84 04 02 p11

1984 06 21

Flash floods brought chaos as heavy rain turned roads into rivers and swamped houses. In Fenstanton parents battled through the night to bail out the village school and in Kedington a centuries-old barn was swept into the river. Flooding was severe in Whitton Close, Swavesey where the evening's events were described as 'pandemonium' 84 06 21 p1

1984 06 21

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1986 01 15

More than 42,000 vehicles a day use each carriageway of the A604 and the Department of Transport is concerned about the absence of public telephones along the route. The problem has become so acute that some residents are refusing to let travellers use their house phones. The Department is also worried about the lack of facilities for lorries stopping overnight at lay-bys. Planning permission has been sought for a service station at Fenstanton and the truckers café outside Godmanchester is also hoping to expand 86 01 15

1988 01 13

Plough Monday celebrations were held at Balsham, Fenstanton and Elsworth where the Cromwell Molly dancers from Great Gransden led a procession of villagers to both pubs, The Poacher and the George and Dragon. They also stopped at a beamed cottage, formerly the Plough pub where, after rolling back the carpet, the dancers sang and jigged to traditional tunes wearing hobnailed boots and decorated clothes. One of the men dressed as a milkmaid – but kept his boots on. At Fenstanton the dancers followed the historical ritual of blacking their faces and donning country costumes before a torch-lit procession from the church to the Chequers, George Inn and the Tudor Hotel. 88 01 13a

1989 01 10

Villagers in Balsham celebrated Plough Monday, a tradition dating back 200 years when villages pulled the plough around the village collecting money from 'well-to-do' families. If anyone refused to give, they would draw a furrow across their lawn. At Fenstanton the Old Hunts Molly Dancers led a procession with over 200 villagers, maintaining a tradition revived about 10 years ago. 89 01 10a

1989 10 03

A light railway system running in a tunnel under Midsummer Common is the latest official suggestion to help solve traffic problems in the centre of Cambridge. It would be an alternative to a line running down a widened section of Newmarket Road. The underground railway would link with a number of other lines from surrounding villages as far out as Fenstanton and terminate at a station in Malcolm Street. The County Council will invest

£60,000 to see if a car park under Midsummer Common is feasible and another £150,000 in a feasibility study for a 60-mph light rail system. 89 10 03a

1990 01 09

Plough Monday celebrations, Balsham, Fenstanton & Elsworth – 90 01 09a

1990 02 05

Fenstanton has a very very good school, a good football pitch, a good milk service. It is a nice village, says Andrew. I like it because it is quite big, you get big gardens – Gemma. If you go down the road you come to a field with two horses and one car and one bull and seven mares – Briony. There is something in the village that really fascinates me – that is the clock tower. There is a post office and a garage. There is a newsagent that sells magazines and all kinds of things – Teresa (Children's impressions of their village) 90 02 05e

1990 02 05

I like Hilton because I know everybody. I like going through the ford and the water goes all over the car. We have feast week and do all sorts of things like bingo and my dad is a beastly boy and we have a raffle. Sometimes I feed the ducks. Hilton is a nice village but it does have its disadvantages. The Potton road always has traffic going across it and it is dangerous to cross especially if you want to go to the shop. There is a village hall where the toddlers go to the playgroup. Hilton school closed in 1955 and since then children have gone by bus to school in Fenstanton (children's impressions of their village) 90 02 05f